

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 5-8 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 2 are amended. No new matter is added by these amendments. Support for the amendments to claims 1 and 2 can be found in Applicant's specification at [0029]-[0031], for example. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiner Ford in the March 25, 2009 personal interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-2 and 5-8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over JP-A-11-054593 to Todoroki. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 recites a substrate transfer unit that automatically leaves a substrate, without requiring a user substrate transfer, that was determined to be in an abnormal substrate holding condition in the substrate holder.

As discussed with and agreed upon by Examiner Ford at the personal interview, Todoroki merely discloses removal of a damaged wafer immediately after detecting a damaged wafer. Specifically, Todoroki at paragraph [0033] and [0043] disclose that, when the detected number of pre-treatment wafer sheets 1 is compared with the detected number of post-treatment wafer sheets 1 and both numbers of sheets differ (i.e., there is a breakage of a wafer sheet 1), an output alarm tone by the alarm 90 occurs. Because the breakage of a wafer 1 can be promptly known by the alarm 90, the wafer 1 damaged can be immediately removed by a user and the stop time of the vertical mold thermal treatment equipment can be shortened. (See Todoroki's paragraph [0035]).

Therefore, Todoroki does not disclose a substrate transfer unit that automatically leaves a substrate, without requiring a user substrate transfer, that was determined to be in an abnormal substrate holding condition in the substrate holder. Thus, Todoroki fails to teach all of the limitations of independent claim 1.

Moreover, for the same reasons as discussed above, Todoroki also fails to disclose a substrate transfer unit that leaves the substrate determined to be abnormal and at least one of the substrates held on and under the substrate determined to be abnormal in the substrate holder, as recited in dependent claim 2.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of all pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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JAO:RHR/ejw

Attachment:

Request for Continued Examination

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